Combined Endeavor 2003

EUCOM directorate coordinates global telecommunication exercise

photos courtesy Ramstein Visual Information

By Hugh C. McBride

Eight years after its relatively humble beginnings on Stuttgart's Kelley Barracks, an annual U.S. European Command-sponsored telecommunication exercise has evolved into the largest event of its kind in the world.

Coordinated by EUCOM's Directorate of Command, Control and Communications Systems, "Combined Endeavor" focuses on the interoperability of participating militaries' communications and information systems.

In addition to the technical aspects of the undertaking, though, the exercise also serves to promote cultural awareness and respect, said Gregory Lee, Combined Endeavor staff member.

"[Combined Endeavor] addresses both human interoperability and technical interoperability," Lee said. "Nations can work together – and we're proof of that."

According to promotional material provided by EUCOM, Combined Endeavor ensures "a constant and reliable peacetime exchange" that allows participating nations to text their communication and information systems according to NATO standards through the use of commercial "off-the-shelf" software.

This effort, Bell said, allows developing nations to access considerable information on NATO standards – which, in turn, promotes regional stability and security.

In a video documenting Combined Endeavor 2002, Lt. Col. Michael Holley says the exercise also gives experts in the field "the time to experiment and try new ways of making communication work."

Combined Endeavor is conducted "in the spirit of" NATO's Partnership for Peace (a program to enhance communication and cooperation among European nations).

Combined Endeavor began with a 1995 meeting involving ten countries. The 2003 event (May 8 to 22 in Baumholder) will include representatives from 39 nations and two multinational organizations.

From Combined Endeavor 2002: [Top left] A team of Romanian military personnel complete a project. [Top right] A service member from Kyrgyzstan Republic tests telecommunication equipment. [Bottom] A "parade of nations" during CE 2002's opening days.